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This Mini comes up big

Racing veteran Guthrie's **customized 'Funster'** rules on track, street

By Bob Golfen
THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

At first blush, Tex Guthrie's Mini Cooper S looks merely like a clean little car, though the aggressive 17-inch alloy wheels with performance tires are a tipoff.

MY DREAM CAR

And when you take a look at Guthrie driving his Mini, it doesn't quite compute that this driver, who's approaching 80, would be piloting what may be the hottest street Mini in the country. And he doesn't hold back on the throttle, either.

But then, that's Guthrie. Anyone familiar with Arizona sport racing knows the name. Tex Guthrie raced for decades in a highly modified Lotus Cortina to many victories in SCCA events. He has been a longtime proponent, driving instructor and organizer for amateur and vin-



The Cooper S logo only hints at what's inside this Mini.

tage racing, and he was a leader in the now-defunct Arizona Sports Racing Association, which produced affordable racing events with a casual "run-what-you-brung" attitude.

Guthrie, who lives in northeast Phoenix, has led a colorful life, and his affable personality and story-telling prowess make him a favorite in the racing community and among his legion of friends and acquaintances.

His most recent endeavor was to create the ultimate Mini Cooper S, one as capable on the track as it is on the street. Lots of research



PHOTOS BY BOB GOLFEN/THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Longtime Arizona racer Tex Guthrie with his highly modified 2002 Mini Cooper S. Despite race-car power and handling, the Mini is docile enough for the street. "I can't imagine myself in a four-door sedan," he says.

See **DREAM CAR** Page AC3

Revved-up Mini conquers track, street

DREAM CAR

Continued from A1

and labor went into a Mini that now sports a supercharged engine tweaked to deliver 228 horsepower to the front wheels, a race-bred close-ratio gearbox, fully adjustable race suspension and powerful custom brakes.

"It took a large amount of time and effort, and not a small amount of money," he said, adding that he's still looking to make his car faster.

Why? The vanity license plate says it all: FUNSTR.

"This car is just so much fun," Guthrie said. "I've owned a lot of cars and this is my favorite of all of them."

Well-known among Mini maniacs, Guthrie's 2002 Cooper S is recognized as the Mini to beat on the track. It has been featured in enthusiast magazines not just for its performance but for how the Mini was modified without sacrificing its everyday drivability.

"I hate it when I have to drive a different car," Guthrie said. "I can't imagine myself in a four-door sedan."

In typical Guthrie fashion, the modified Mini came about as the result of a challenge. A national hot-Mini magazine called MC2, for "Mini Cooper squared," was building a project race car, and when Guthrie read about that, he told the editors he could exceed whatever they built in racetrack performance.

That challenge evolved into a call from the magazine for drivers to submit their performance-enhanced Minis to compete to a shootout in Las Vegas. Guthrie's car and 10 others made the



PHOTOS BY BOB GOLFEN/THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Seventeen-inch spoke alloy wheels and a lowered stance gives Tex Guthrie's Mini Cooper S an aggressive look. Guthrie's creation achieved the best times at a national competition outside of Las Vegas that included several really fierce Minis.



An intercooler for the supercharger and a custom air intake boost power to 228 horses.

cut at Spring Motors Motorsports Ranch in Pahrump, near Vegas.

In the hands of Guthrie's son Bruce, also an experienced racer, the Funster achieved the best times in the shootout against a wide range of competitors, including several really fierce Minis. Besides the engine power, the Mini also showed off its go-cart handling and tenacious stopping power.

"I have brakes on this thing to die for," Guthrie said. "They would stop a freight train."

Tex says that most of the



From any angle, Guthrie's customized ride — aka "Funster" — is an attention-getter.

"go and handling" was done by Mynes Custom Tune and Race Technik and the "amazing stopping power" was done by Wilwood Brakes.

It's evident Guthrie isn't ready to slow down. He tears up the back roads with the best of them, and he's always prepared for some track time.

"I'm closing in on 80, I feel good, and I'm comfortable driving a performance car," he said. "It's my life."

The Funster

Tex Guthrie's Mini Cooper S is modified for performance on street and track, including:

Engine: 1.6-liter supercharged inline-4, with 228 horsepower measured at the driving wheels, compared with 163 horsepower rating for the stock supercharged engine. Modifications include ported and polished cylinder head, lightened flywheel, Mynes Custom Tune electronics, custom water-to-air intercooler and air intake, smaller supercharger pulley, modified camshaft, Matek sport exhaust header and Borla exhaust system.

Transmission: Getrag close-ratio six-speed manual, Spec performance clutch.

Suspension: Bilstein coil-over front shocks, adjustable anti-sway bar, H-Sport adjustable camber arms front and rear.

Brakes: Wilwood Dynopro front calipers, competition pads and directionally vaned rotors.

Wheels: 17-inch Enkei RPM with Toyo performance tires.

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